

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01473 191149Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 IO-13 ACDA-12 OMB-01

TRSE-00 AID-05 /094 W

-----056774 191156Z /10

O R 191107Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7162

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L 1473

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 19 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1465 (DTG 181050Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE ISRAELIS APPARENTLY TOOK TIBNIN ON MARCH 18, WHICH IS 12 KM. FROM THE BORDER, THUS EXCEEDING THE EIRLIER SELF-PROCLAIMED LIMIT OF 10 KM. MOST CASUALTIES IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01473 191149Z

THE FIGHTING HAVE BEEN LEBANESE CIVILIANS ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESS OBSERVERS. LOCAL UN OFFICIALS ESTIMATED 700 CASUALTIES AND LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES CONTINUE TO ARRIVE IN BEIRUT, ALTHOUGH REPORTS OF HOW MANY VARY WIDELY. THERE WAS SPORADIC SMALL-ARMS FIRE THROUGHOUT WEST BEIRUT DURING EVENING MARCH 18-19, AND REFUGEES TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO OCCUPY AN APARTMENT OF AN AMERICAN

EMBASSY OFFICER. THREE MISSING JOURNALISTS WERE FOUND ALIVE AND WELL. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION

A. HEAVY FIGHTING CONTINUES IN THE SOUTH. ISRAELI FORCES APPARENTLY TOOK TIBNIN ON MARCH 18, WHICH IS 12 KM. FROM THE BORDER, THUS EXCEEDING THEIR SELF-PROCLAIMED LIMIT OF 10 KM. (THE PLO, HOWEVER, DENIED THE ISRAELIS TOOK TIBNIN.) THE IDF ALSO MOVED INTO HARIS ABOUT 3 KM. SOUTHWEST OF TIBNIN, ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESS OBSERVERS.

B. THE ISRAELIS TOOK KAWKABA AND ARE THREATENING HASBAYYA, TWO POSITIONS WHICH ARE KEY FOR CONTROL OF THE ARQUB, ACCORDING TO RIGHTIST LE REVEIL. (THE ISRAELIS HAVE, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY REFRAINED FROM BOMBARDING THE TOWN OF HASBAYYA ITSELF, WHERE THE POPULATION IS LARGELY DRUZE AND WHICH HAS PUBLICLY DECLARED THAT IT IS NEUTRAL IN THE FIGHT AND THAT IT IS HARBORING NO PALESTINIANS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, ABOUT HALF OF THE TOWN'S 20,000 RESIDENTS STILL REMAIN.)

C. ISRAELI AIRCRAFT CARRIED OUT HEAVY STRIKES IN THE TYR AREA ON MARCH 18, ACCORDING TO BEIRUT PRESS REPORTS. ISRAELI HELIBORNE TROOPS LANDED AT HANNAWIYAH, ABOUT FIVE KILOMETERS SOUTHEAST OF TYR, ACCORDING TO LE REVEIL. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01473 191149Z

THE FATAH MILITARY COMMANDER FOR SOUTH LEBANON, HAJ ISMA'IL, TOLD A WESTERN CORRESPONDENT ON MARCH 18 THAT THE ISRAELI WOULD TRY TO TAKE THE CITY, BUT THE CORRESPONDENT WHO HAD JUST VISITED THE AREA THOUGHT THIS UNLIKELY.

C. RELIABLE EYEWITNESS REPORTS ISRAELIS LANDED AT ADLUN

ON MARCH 17 AND THEN DESTROYED THE TWO TAXICABS CARRYING CIVILIANS (SEE BEIRUT 1465).

3. CASUALTIES

IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM AND EMBOFFS ON MARCH 18, AN NAHAR PHOTOGRAPHER GEORGES SEMERDJIAN AND WIRESERVICE REPORTERS, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE FRONT LINES, SAID THAT MOST OF THE CASUALTIES RESULTING FROM THE ISRAELI ATTACK WERE LEBANESE CIVILIANS. SEMERDJIAN REMARKED THAT HE HAD SEEN SIX WOMEN AND CHILDREN BURIED UNDER THE RUBBLE AT HARIS, FOR EXAMPLE. THE REPORTERS BELIEVED THE RESULT WAS BITTERLY IRONIC: THE RESIDENTS OF SOUTH LEBANON, REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGION, HAD BECOME MORE AND MORE HOSTILE TO THE PALESTINIANS, THE IDF, BY KILLING MANY CIVILIANS AND CAUSING

THE MASSIVE DISLOCATION OF OTHERS, HAD MANAGED TO MAKE
THE RESIDENTS HATE THE ISRAELIS AS MUCH AS THE PALESTINIANS.

4. REFUGEES

A. LOCAL UN OFFICIALS ON MARCH 18 ESTIMATED A TOTAL OF 700
DEATHS, INCLUDING BOTH LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS, SINCE THE
START OF THE FIGHTING. A FATAH OFFICIAL ON MARCH 18 SAID
PRIVATELY THAT 300 CIVILIANS HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE FIGHTING.

B. LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES CONTINUE TO COME TO BEIRUT,
ALTHOUGH THE ESTIMATES OF HOW MANY VARY WIDELY. THE GOVERNOR
OF SOUTH LEBANON REMARKED PRIVATELY ON MARCH 18 THAT ABOUT
50,000 PEOPLE HAD LEFT THE SOUTH, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 01473 191149Z

GONE TO SIDON AND ABOUT 15,000 OF WHOM HAD ARRIVED IN BEIRUT.
UN OFFICIALS ON MARCH 18 ESTIMATED THAT 10,000 PEOPLE HAD
BEEN DISPLACED, AND THE ICRC ON MARCH 17 SAID AS MANY AS
130,000 (SEE BEIRUT 1460).

C. A WIRE SERVICE STINGER ESTIMATED ON MARCH 18 THAT ABOUT
30 PERCENT OF THE ORIGINAL POPULATION REMAINED IN TYR AND ABOUT
15 PERCENT OF THE ORIGINAL POPULATION IN NABATIYAH. HE SAID THAT
THE PORT AREA OF TYR HAD BEEN HEAVILY DAMAGED, BUT NOT OTHER
PARTS OF THE CITY.

5. SECURITY SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT

A. THERE WAS SPORADIC SMALL-ARMS FIRE THROUGHOUT WEST BEIRUT
DURING THE EVENING OF MARCH 18-19, BUT RELATIVE NORMALITY
RETURNED TO THE CITY IN THE MORNING. PEOPLE WERE OUT STROLLING
ON THE COAST ROAD AND TRAFFIC WAS NORMAL.

B. ON MARCH 18 ABOUT 50 REFUGEES OCCUPIED EMPTY APARTMENTS IN
THE NASSIF BUILDING, WHERE ONE AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICER LIVES,
BUT DID NOT ENTER HIS APARTMENT. ARMED MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN
SOCIAL NATIONAL PARTY FORCED OPEN THE DOOR OF AN APARTMENT
OCCUPIED BY AN AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICER IN THE NEW MALAS
BUILDING, WHERE THERE ARE FOUR OTHER APARTMENTS OCCUPIED BY
AMERICAN EMBASSY PERSONNEL. THE OFFICER ARRIVED JUST AFTER
THE ARMED MEN, WHO LEFT WHEN SHE EXPLAINED IT WAS AN EMBASSY
APARTMENT. ARMED MURABITUN HAVE SET UP AN OFFICE IN THE
FAKHURI BUILDING, OSTENSIBLY TO PROTECT IT. EMBASSY PERSONNEL
HAVE THREE APARTMENTS IN THE BUILDING.

6. JOURNALISTS FOUND

THE ISRAELI ARMY ON MARCH 18 FOUND ALIVE AND WELL NEAR HARIS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 BEIRUT 01473 191149Z

THREE MISSING JOURNALISTS--DAVID HIRST OF THE GUARDIAN,
BOUGLAS ROBERTS OF THE VOA, AND NED TEMKO OF THE UPI (SEE
BEIRUT 1471. THE ISRAELIS TOOK THEM BACK TO TEL AVIV.
PARKER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT01473
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780121-1155
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780350/aaaabqdx.tel
Line Count: 179
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 47917cc4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 1465
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3279195
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 19 1200 HOURS LOCAL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/47917cc4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014